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DIRECTORATE OF
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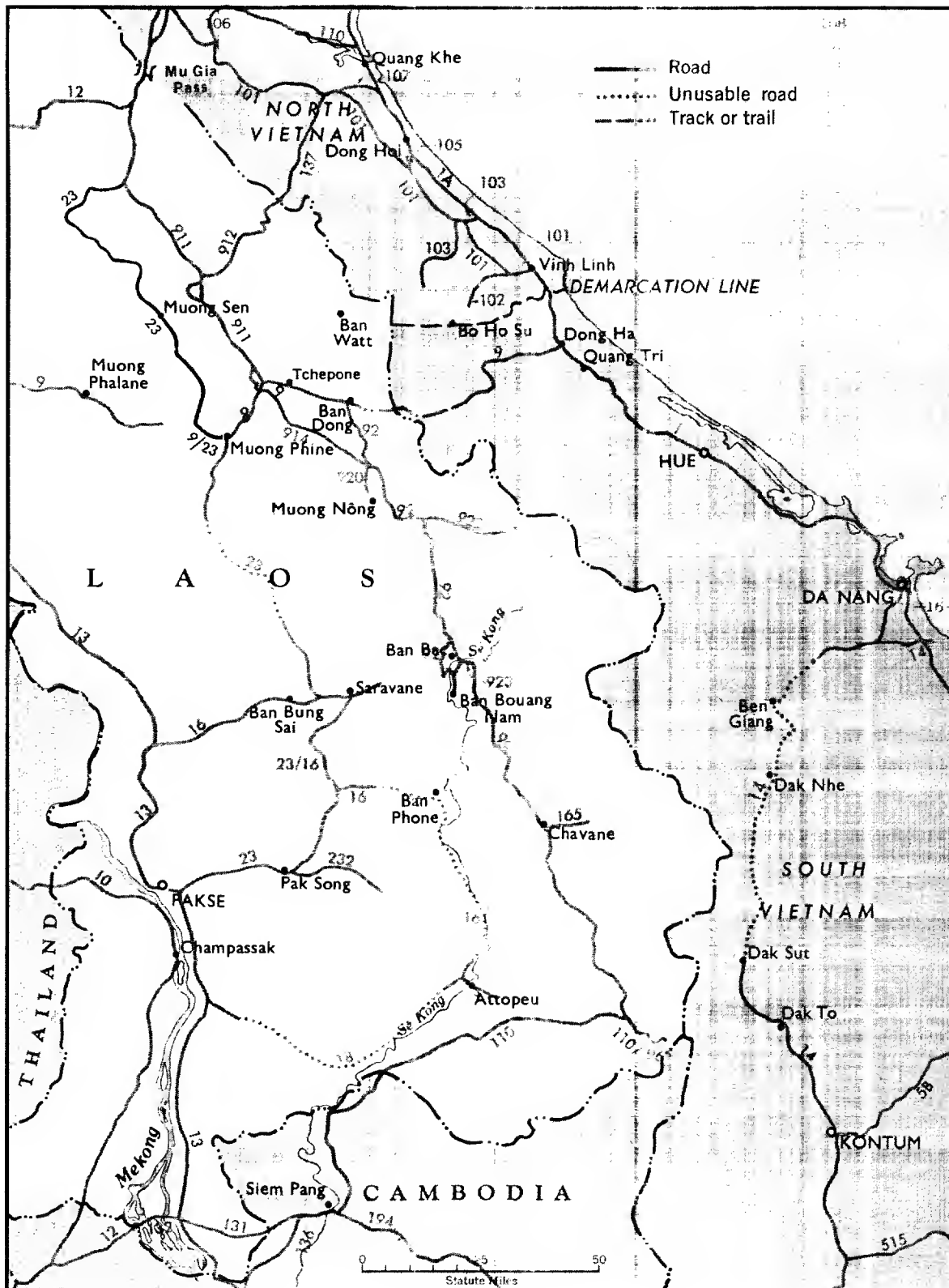
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LAOS PANHANDLE



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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: There is still no evidence of any domestic political repercussions from the ouster of Defense Minister Co.

Although Western journalists have reported that Co was ordered to delay his return from abroad and are speculating that a cabinet reshuffle involving Co is imminent, such stories have apparently been censored from the Vietnamese press.

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Heavy Truck Traffic in Laos: Large numbers of southbound trucks have been observed recently by road-watch teams located near the Mu Gia Pass and along Route 23 in the Laotian panhandle.

A total of about 340 vehicles were counted moving through the Mu Gia Pass between 3 and 17 January, a figure which is as high as any reported during last year's dry season. Farther south, a group of approximately 225 trucks was seen on Route 23 during a five-day period in mid-January suggesting that, as in past years, the Communists are moving supplies to the south in large, sporadic convoys.

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The movement on Route 23 also represents the first heavy use of that road in two years. During the 1965-1966 dry season the Communists relied almost exclusively on the parallel Route 911. The reactivation of Route 23 provides the enemy with an alternate road south from the Mu Gia Pass, thus making this portion of the infiltration system less vulnerable to US air attacks.

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Indonesia: The anti-Sukarno campaign has accelerated, but definitive action against the President still seems some weeks away.

Demands for "action against the old order" are being made with increasing directness by high officials. Foreign Minister Malik has publicly repeated his suggestion that Sukarno resign. Even General Suharto has twice stated in the past week that those who do not acknowledge their errors will face action.

In addition, Sukarno's probable involvement in the attempted coup of October 1965 is being further publicized. Student and political party protest ranges from demands that the President be investigated to calls for his execution.

Suharto remains committed to the use of legal means against Sukarno. The attorney general announced on 23 January that he would soon submit to Suharto his dossier on Sukarno's involvement in the events of October 1965. Suharto in turn will pass relevant information to the congress for action when it convenes in March or April.

The US Embassy in Djakarta believes that Sukarno may be allowed to remain a figurehead after signing his power away. It estimates that even his complete removal probably would no longer provoke dangerous politico-military repercussions, although there might be isolated disturbances in East and Central Java.

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Iraq: The government may be working itself into a position where it will have little political choice but to seize Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) installations.

The Iraqi press and radio are harping even more strongly on the theme that IPC is at fault in the company's dispute with Syria. At the same time, the Iraqis admit that Syria's intransigence, which for the past month has blocked Iraqi oil from moving through IPC's pipeline to the Mediterranean, is seriously damaging Iraq's interests. Iraqi Prime Minister Talib, who advocates nationalization of IPC's properties, apparently is on such popular political ground that President Arif has felt obliged to back him openly, even though other members of the government have seemed at best lukewarm to the idea.

On 23 January, Arif made a speech demanding that IPC settle with Syria by next weekend without specifying the measures Iraq might take if the company refuses.

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NOTES

Communist China - Macao: Negotiations between the Portuguese and Chinese are continuing, but the two sides appear stalemated over the exact language of the apology demanded by the Chinese. Tension in the colony is rising, as pro-Communists in Macao have announced that an economic boycott of Portuguese officials will begin today. Peking appears determined to force an abject apology from the Portuguese, and if Lisbon refuses to yield, additional Chinese pressure can be expected. [REDACTED]

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Ghana: Security officials have recently foiled two apparently unrelated plots against the ruling National Liberation Council (NLC). In one, a few disgruntled civilians had enlisted the aid of at least one junior army officer in an amateurish scheme to murder most of the NLC members and bring off a coup on 23 February. The second plot, also involving assassinations, was being orchestrated by one of Nkrumah's top security men, who has just been arrested in Nigeria and returned to Ghana. The regime, by giving maximum publicity to these cases, hopes to deter further plotting. [REDACTED]

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Uganda: Unidentified terrorists shot up the limousine of the vice president on 22 January in what may have been intended as an attempt on President Obote. This possibly was the work of the "Secret Council," clandestine supporters of the deposed king of the Baganda tribe. Obote has been particularly unpopular among the Baganda since his suppression of their uprising last May. The "council" has hoped by acts of terrorism to incite the Baganda to open opposition to the President, but it appears to have little support among moderate Baganda leaders. [REDACTED]

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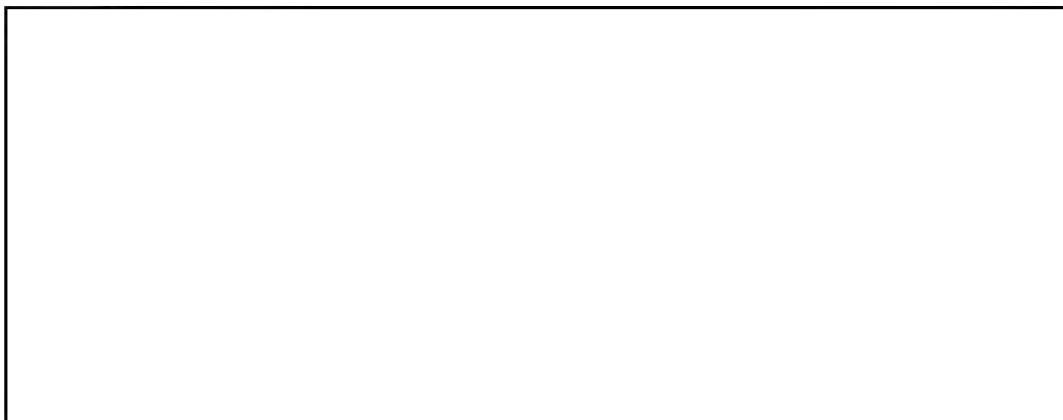
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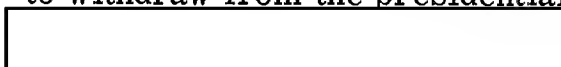
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Nicaragua: The situation in Managua has eased somewhat, but further outbreaks of violence could occur between now and the 5 February national elections. A pro-Somoza rally is scheduled for 29 January in Managua. Aguero has not made any statement on his plans, but there is no indication that he intends to withdraw from the presidential race.

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